

Message Text

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ACTION ARA-10

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TAGS: PDIP, PINT, GY

SUBJECT: GUYANESE TRAVEL RESTRICTIONS ON DIPLOMATS: SHOULD WE
RETALIATE?

1. FOR THE PAST SIX MONTHS OR MORE, THE GOG HAS NOT PERMITTED
LOCALLY RESIDENT FOREIGN DIPLOMATS OR MOST OTHER FOREIGN NATIONALS
TO TRAVEL TO THE SOUTHERN TWO-THIRDS OF THE COUNTRY OR TO SOME
AREAS FURTHER NORTH NEAR THE VENEZUELAN BORDER. THE ONLY RECENT
EXCEPTION OF WHICH WE ARE AWARE AMONG DIPLOMATS WAS THE RESIDENT
CUBAN AMBASSADOR, WHO ACCOMPANIED PM BURNHAM TO OPEN A NEW SOUTHERN
NATIONAL SERVICE TRAINING CAMP. ONE US RESIDENT DIPLOMATIC PASSPORT
HOLDER AND ONE CANADIAN RESIDENT DIPLOMATIC PASSPORT HOLDER, BOTH
WITH FAMILY MEMBERS ALSO HOLDING DIPLOMATIC PASSPORTS, APPLIED
SOME WEEKS AGO TO VISIT LETHEM AND OTHER AREAS IN THE RUPUNUNI,
AND WERE TURNED DOWN. SINCE THEN, US EMBASSY AND CANADIAN HIGH
COMMISSION EMPLOYEES HAVE BEEN UNDER INSTRUCTION BY THEIR CHIEFS
OF MISSION NOT TO REQUEST SUCH PERMISSION PENDING CLARIFICATION BY
THE GOG. A STATEMENT OF THE GOG'S POLICY WAS REQUESTED BY THE
CANADIAN HIGH COMMISSIONER AS DEAN OF THE DIPLOMATIC CORPS
ABOUT TWO MONTHS AGO BY NOTE TO THE FOREIGN OFFICE. THERE
HAS BEEN NO RESPONSE, INFORMAL INQUIRY REVEALED THAT THE NOTE
WAS REFERRED TO THE MINISTRY OF HOME AFFAIRS, AND THE CURRENT
DEAN OF THE CORPS, THE PRC AMBASSADOR, HAS BEEN UNWILLING TO
FOLLOW UP.

2. ORIGINALLY, THE GOG REGULATIONS RESTRICTING TRAVEL WERE NOT IN
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WRITTEN FORM, AND WERE ENFORCED THROUGH THE SIMPLE EXPEDIENT

OF THE GOVT-OWNED GUYANA AIRWAYS CORPORATION'S NOT ISSUING TICKETS TO FOREIGNERS FOR SUCH TRAVEL UNLESS A LETTER OF PERMISSION FROM THE MINISTRY OF HOME AFFAIRS WAS ATTACHED. (THESE AREAS ARE NOT ACCESSIBLE BY ROAD OR PASSENGER BOAT). MORE RECENTLY, A CIRCULAR WAS SENT TO ALL TRAVEL AGENTS, LOCAL AIRLINES, AND SHIPPING COMPANIES, SPECIFYING THE AREAS IN GUYANA (ROUGHLY AS DESCRIBED IN PARA 1) TO WHICH FOREIGNERS COULD NOT TRAVEL WITHOUT SPECIFIC PERMISSION FROM THE MINISTRY OF HOME AFFAIRS AND PROHIBITING THOSE AGENCIES FROM ISSUING TICKETS WITHOUT SUCH PERMISSION.

3. IN ONE CASE, BEFORE THE SPECIFIC REGULATION WAS ISSUED, THE GUYANA AIRWAYS CORPORATION GAVE A TICKET TO A CANADIAN DIPLOMATIC PASSPORT HOLDER, WHO TRAVELED TO THE RUPUNUNI. THE PERMANENT SECRETARY OF THE MINISTRY OF HOME AFFAIRS SUBSEQUENTLY WROTE AN ENERGETIC PROTEST TO THE CANADIAN HIGH COMMISSIONER REGARDING HIS ESTABLISHMENT'S VIOLATION" OF THE REGULATION.

4. GUYANESE NATIONALS MUST ALSO OBTAIN PERMISSION TO GO TO SOME SPECIFIC AREAS OF THE COUNTRY, BUT THE "PROHIBITED AREA" FOR GUYANESE NATIONALS IS MUCH SMALLER THAN FOR FOREIGNERS.

5. THE GOG HAS NEVER FORMALLY GIVEN A REASON FOR IMPOSING THE TRAVEL RESTRICTIONS, BUT "SECURITY" AND "MALARIA EPIDEMIC" ARE MOST FREQUENTLY MENTIONED. THE FALSITY OF THE LATTER REASON IS OBVIOUS FROM THE FACT THAT MALARIA IS A PREVALENT IN THE MATTHEWS RIDGE AND MABARUMA AREAS IN THE NORTHWEST (WHERE TRAVEL IS NOT RESTRICTED) AS IN THE RESTRICTED AREAS. "SECURITY" IS ALMOST CERTAINLY THE REAL REASON, THOUGH A PRECISE INTERPRETATION OF "SECURITY" IS DIFFICULT TO DETERMINE. THERE IS LITTLE OR NO VIOLENT UNREST IN THE RESTRICTED AREAS, AND THE LOCAL POPULATION ARE NO MORE OPPRESSED THAN IN THE REMAINDER OF GUYANA. FREQUENT ALLEGATIONS OF SMALL NUMBERS OF CUBAN TROOPS OR MILITARY ADVISORS IN THE APOTERI AND VENEZUELAN AND BRAZILIAN BORDER AREAS AND, OF COURSE, GUYANA'S ALLEGATIONS OF "DESTABILIZATION" FROM FOREIGN CAPITALIST ENEMIES ARE AN OBVIOUS POSSIBLE REASON FOR THE RESTRICTIONS.

6. SINCE WE SEEM UNLIKELY TO RESOLVE THIS MATTER THROUGH THE DIPLOMATIC CORPS, SHOULD WE APPROACH THE GOG UNILATERALLY? WE UNDERSTAND THAT IN EUROPEAN SOCIALIST COUNTRIES WHERE SUCH TRAVEL LIMITED OFFICIAL USE

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RESTRICTIONS ARE IMPOSED, WE IMPOSE RECIPROCAL RESTRICTIONS ON THEIR DIPLOMATS IN THE US. PROHIBITION ON TRAVEL BY GUYANESE DIPLOMATS IN THE US OVER AN EQUIVALENT PERCENTAGE AREA, SAY, THOSE STATES WEST OF THE MISSISSIPPI, WOULD BE A SANCTION THE THREAT OF WHICH MIGHT PROVOKE SOME ACTION. SHOULD WE INFORMALLY RAISE THAT THREAT IN A LOW-KEYED WAY WITH THE FOREIGN MINISTER? WE HAVE ALREADY MENTIONED OUR DISSATISFACTION WITH THE EXISTING RESTRICTIONS TO FONMIN WILLS AND OTHER FONOFF OFFICERS WITHOUT

EFFECT. IF WE DO MAKE THE THREAT, WE SHOULD BE PREPARED TO FOLLOW
UP WITH THE SANCTION IF THE THREAT DOESNT WORK.

7. THE DEPARTMENT'S ADVICE IS REQUESTED
MATTHEWS

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